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Maurice
(Mason, John)

AN
Impartial Account,
OF
MR. JOHN MASON,
OF
WATER-STRATFORD,
AND HIS
SENTIMENTS.

By H. MAURICE, Rector of *Tyringham, Bucks.*

Μη υπερφρονειν παρ ο δει φρονειν, Αλλα φρονειν εις το σωφρονειν. *Ne quis Sapiat
supra quam oportet, sed ad sobrietatem Sapiat.* Rom. 12. 3.

—Proxima puris
Sors est manibus, nescire nefas. Sen. Herc. Fur.

L O N D O N :

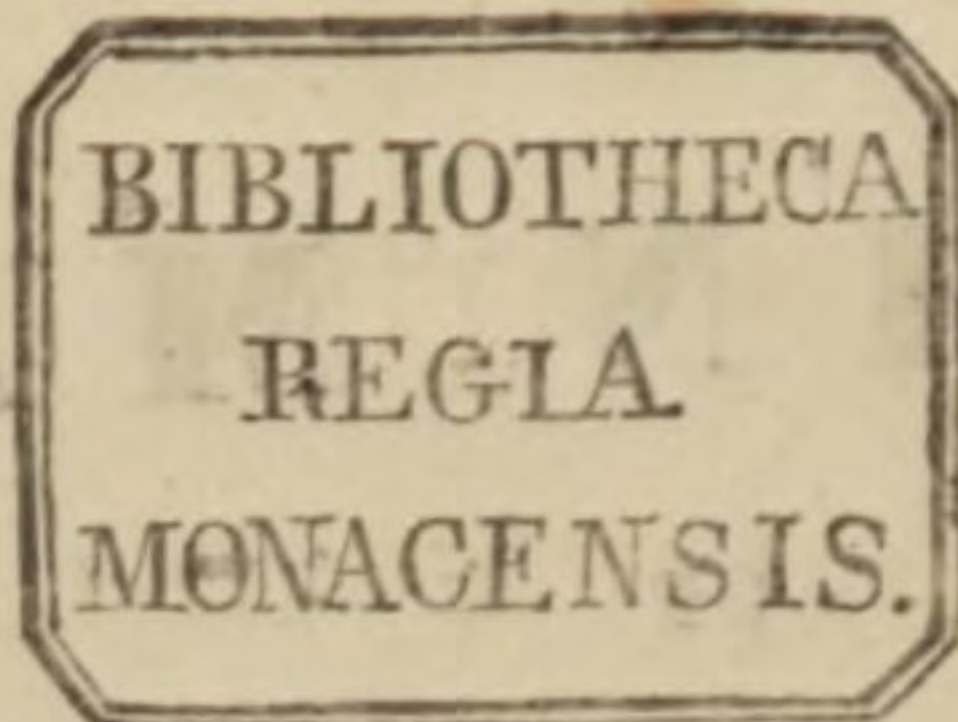
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411. B.



TO THE
MOST REVEREND FATHER IN GOD
J O H N,
Lord Archbishop of **YORK.**

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR GRACE,

IN Obedience to your Lordship's Wishes, I here publish an entire Account of Mr. Mason, and his Followers; which by God's blessing may detect Error, and becalm Faction; In those chiefly, who esteem a general Rendezvous upon Earth, a better enjoyment, than Heaven's Triumph; who look upon all Government as Antichristian, and think it their duty to despise Dominion, that they may set up themselves, and Christ together.

I had designed, indeed, to silence the Incredulity of the Atheist and Deist, but a Report being spread (and believed by some great Friends) that I was the Publisher of Mr. Mason's

THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

Letters, &c. made me contract my Thoughts, that I might gain, and undeceive the more Readers.*

I return your Grace my Humble Thanks, for the Honour of your commands, for the opportunity of doing a probable piece of Service to the Church of God, and for the liberty you have given me, to profess myself,

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's constant Servant,

HENRY MAURICE.†

* The Letters alluded to were printed in 1694, and are re-printed at the end of this Pamphlet. EDIT.

† He was of Christ's College, Cambridge; A.B. 1669; A.M. 1673; and was presented to the united Rectories of Tyringham and Filgrave, 22d October, 1675, by Edward Backwell, Esq. He died at Filgrave, and was buried at Tyringham, 20th April 1699. EDIT.

AN
Impartial Account
OF
MR. JOHN MASON,
AND HIS
SENTIMENTS.

THE Design of *these Papers* is to transmit to Posterity, as remarkable an instance of *pure Enthusiasm* as the Reformed World ever knew. *They* are writ in Answer to several Letters. The *First* of which desir'd a Representation of the Matters of Fact at *Water Stratford*. The *Next* desir'd an *Account* of Mr. *Mason's* Character. The *Third* ask'd *my Thoughts* of the Impulses and Vision to which he pretended, and what might occasion them? The *Last* was, To enquire how it could be consistent with the Goodness of God to suffer a Person that meant well, to be deluded?

The Fact is this, That for Four Years, or more, Mr. *Mason* had been a stiff Asserter of *our Saviour's Reign a Thousand Years on Earth*, and had drawn a Scheme of it in a Discourse, call'd, *The Midnight Cry*; which was Preach'd in several Places with great Zeal, and received with much Applause.

This brought him many Followers Ten Miles about ; and as his Hearers encreas'd for the Novelty of the Doctrine, so the Notion was confirmed, and in time improved. The *Reign upon Earth*, was to commence in *England* and *Water-Stratford* was the very Spot of Ground where *his* Standard was to be set up ; Those who would repair thither, might find a safe Retreat, but all other parts of the Nation would *infallibly* be exposed to Fire and Sword. Those who could heartily believe this, thought it their Interest to reside *there* ; and those who had it, brought with them as many Necessaries as they thought would last 'till the good time should come. As for Lodgings, when his House was fill'd, some (as I was told) lay in the Town, and others made themselves open Partitions in the Barn, fearing no ill because they design'd none. About *Easter* last their notions were fix'd, and their Habitations settl'd. Here they spent their time, nigh an hundred of them (besides many hundreds of well wishers who were coming and going) in Dancing, Singing, Praying, &c. 'till the *long expected Appearance* presented itself, on *April* the 16th last (1694) about *One* in the Morning. Towards the latter end of *April*, being at *Northampton* I call'd on Mr. *Ives*, a Relation to Mr. *Mason's* Family, and discoursing on his late pretences ; Mrs. *Ives* show'd me the following Letter, dated *April 23d.* which I immediately Transcribed.

April 23d. Water Stratford.

DEAR COUS. IVES.

THE *Thing* which I am about to relate to you, is very wonderful: I need not rehearse what Doctrines my Brother has of late (four years) been upon ; you know it has been of Christ's setting up of his Kingdom, and that it would be usher'd in by a dreadful Tribulation, and that this was very near at hand. But

the great Thing I have to acquaint you with, is, That on the sixteenth day of this Instant, the Lord Jesus Christ did appear in this House to his Servant my Brother Mason in his glorious Person. He was in a crimson Garment, his Countenance exceeding Beautiful, abundance of sweetness and great Majesty. He had the sight of him for some considerable time, and then he was pleas'd to disappear. I have not time nor strength to write what I heard from him of Christ's glorious Person: He often says, that all the glories that the World speaks of, are but dirt to what has appeared in the face of Christ. Thus much I was desirous to acquaint you, and the rest of my Relations with; and now He and the rest, that have had the Faith of Christ's coming, live in the immediate expectation of Christ's Appearance here, to gather to himself all his People, to preserve them from the storm that is coming upon this land. Those I say that God has given this Faith to, are come hither, and sing and dance before the Ark day and night some at a time, and bid the Michals despise to their peril. Here has been many hundred of Spectators, but my Brother's advice to them all is daily, to go home, and see if they have Oyl, and trim their Lamps, for the Bridegroom is very near coming.

My Brother has had a thousand false stories reported of him; and one that he was mad; But he never had any thing like it in all his Life. And it is not doubted but he will prove the Prophet of the Age, and sent of God, as Noah was, to warn the World, and the Forerunner of Christ's second coming, as the Holy Baptist was of Christ's first coming; and that Elijah in the last of Malachy, that was to be sent before the Great and Dreadful Day.

But I must conclude, That those who have this Faith of Christ's coming are mean, unlearned, and contemptible Persons, in the Eye of the World, excepting this Minister; and that has

much stumbled all sorts of People. God gives the Faith to whom he pleases ; and at Christ's first coming was given to Fishermen, and unlearned poor creatures ; and so He has done again, that no Flesh may glory in His sight. I have been larger than I thought. I rest

Your Affectionate and Humble

Servant and Kinswoman,

Margaret Holms.

Upon the reading of this, I went on the 28th of *April*, to visit my old Friend Mr. *Mason* at *Water Stratford*, with whom I had been familiarly acquainted, twenty years before. I no sooner came into his Yard, but was surprized with the wildness of unexpected Noises.

They were all singing, some to one tune and some to another, but so loud, that it could not be exact.

When I entered the House a more melancholy Scene of a Spiritual *Bedlam* (which still fills me with horror) presented itself ; Men, Women, and Children running up and down, one while stretching their arms upwards to catch their Saviour in his coming down, others extending them forwards to meet his embraces, a third with a sudden turn pretends to grasp him, and a fourth clapping their hands for joy they had him, with several other antick Postures, which made me think that *Bedlam* itself was but a faint Image of their *Spiritual Phrensies*. All this while they were singing as loud as their throats would give them leave, till they were quite spent, and look'd black in the Face.

When these were tir'd, in came a fresh Company, repeating the same Hymns, with the like noise and wildness.

At this time Mr. *Mason* was in a darkish Garret upon his Bed, (and dy'd as I take it, within a Month after) and it was with some difficulty that I got access to him; (for they had deny'd several.)

The Sister who wrote the Letter, introduced me, but told me beforehand, that *he* did not care to talk of his Sentiments, or Vision; but referred me (as to that Matter) to his *Two Witnesses*, who could say as much to it as himself.

He had a Week before been troubled with a Γλωσσαλγία, or a *Ranula* under his Tongue, which made him the more unwilling to talk. While I discoursed of common Matters, he heard me patiently, but as soon as I enquired of his Vision, he sign'd to his Sister, to have me down to the two Witnesses, who knew all his Mind.

I went from him into a lower chamber, where two Men which they call'd the Witnesses (but I suppose one was but a Deputy, because I have since heard, that one of the Witnesses, who dy'd within a Week after, was sick when I was there) met me with many Spectators.

The Witnesses gave me the same Account with the Letter, That *our Lord* appeared to the *Prophet* on the 16th of April, &c.

And to confirm the Truth of it, they further told me, That, at the same time, two Angels appeared in white, to a Man of their Society, as he was going homewards to *Great Harwood*, and forc'd him back again.

I ask'd the Witnesses, What was their proper Business? They answered, with much assurance, That their *Prophet* was not to bear Witness of himself; That in the mouth of two or three Witnesses every truth should be established; That God would give Power to his two Witnesses, &c. But the choicest Place was (as I remember) *Isa. xl. 5.* *One shall say I am the Lord's, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and another*

shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and sir-name himself by the name of Israel: and so on to the 8th Verse, Ye are my Witnesses.

They witnessed, That their Prophet was the very Person spoken of, *Rev. i. 1. He sent and signified it by his Angel to his servant John.*

They witnessed, That Mr. *Mason* was that *Elijah*; that *John the Baptist* was not *that Elijah* that was to appear before the great and terrible Day, as the *Baptist* said I am not; therefore there were two *Elijah's*, and therefore *John Mason* was one.

They witnessed farther, That their Prophet saw our Saviour for a considerable time, that *He said many things, but spoke no words.* For his Majestick Looks said, that he came to Judge and Condemn the greatest part of the World; and his smiling Countenance said, He would save *Sion*, and the *holy Ground*; that is said they, *Water Stratford and its Borders.*

They could not, or would not tell me, how far the Borders would extend, but they told me that few, that very few of this Land should be Sav'd.

This I thought very hard, and therefore I ask'd them, What would become of some truly pious Persons, that might never hear of *Water Stratford*? To which they answered, that some of the *Elect* would be *hall'd* thither, without their consent, by Angels. Will our Saviour (said I) be visible to all when He comes amongst you? They reply'd, To very few: And as they seem'd to explain themselves, only to the Prophet, and his Witnesses; but with the Prophet he would daily Converse, and be very Familiar; and His chief Residence would be in the Clouds. They expect Him, they assur'd me, every Minute, and therefore Day and Night they are upon the Watch. When our Saviour has done here, He would (they said) carry *the Believers in this new Prophet*, to the *New Jerusalem*, and gather the Elect in other places to them.

When I ask'd 'em, How Mr. *Mason* was affected at the sight of our Saviour? they had an answer ready, That he had not the least fear upon him, which, they told me, was the fulfilling of a Prophecy, *Heb. ix.* and the last. *He shall appear the second time without sin to salvation.*

And now I thought it time to enquire seriously, Whether it was not possible that their Prophet might be deceived? To which the Sister (who had been all the while present) gravely Answered, with an obliging Accent; *O Sir, the Holiness of his Life makes it impossible, that God should permit him to be deceived.*

When I had given (as I thought) a due reply to this, *the Witnesses* confess'd, they did not much insist upon *that*, since the *Spirit* assur'd both the Prophet and themselves, That *He* was the very *Christ* that appear'd to him.

To this I return'd, That several have been as confident of the *Spirit's impulse* as themselves, and yet have been deceiv'd; and then they cited something out of Dr. *Owen*, That though he that has not the Spirit may think he has it, and be deceived; yet they that have it know they have it, and cannot be deceived. Like those that are in a Dream, may think themselves awake; but they that are awake are well assur'd of it. After this I ask'd what Argument *they* had to convince the doubtful, who thought it a little unreasonable to believe such *strange matters* at second hand? What Miracles, what Signs, &c. But they interrupted me, and in a half-passion answer'd, This was *sign* sufficient, that all should be Sav'd that believed it, and they that did not, should be *destroy'd and damn'd*.

This began to stir me, and I could not forbear saying, *That I fear'd they were all deluded, and that they would find in a little time, &c.* But the Witnesses would not suffer me to proceed, and starting up in a furious transport, told me, I would be (I have forgot the Word, but am sure it meant) damn'd for my Unbelief, and so they avoided me.

When I came down into their Parlour, the Dancers were increas'd in that Room to *Thirty* or more.

They usually entertain'd all sorts of Vagabond-Fidlers, Singing-Boys or Wenches, and hir'd them to stay with them; because they thought our Saviour would have all sorts of Musick to attend Him.

They pretended not to any Miracles, nor discerning of Spirits; nor need they, for they require nothing but this Faith, (That Christ has this Second time appear'd) in Order to Salvation.

If I had talk'd with the Prophet himself of these things, I could have had no better satisfaction; for the only Argument he made use of at that time, to any one that doubted, was—*By the Eternal God I saw him with these Eyes.—By the Living God 'tis true, &c.* As he told many that went to see him, and as he said several times in his last Sermon out of the Window (the *Sunday* before I was with him) to above five hundred (some say fifteen hundred) People.

He had for a long time left off giving the Sacrament to any, but some select Persons of his own way; and since the *16th* of *April* gave it no more, because Christ was come. He had left off Praying because he thought nothing remained to be prayed for; and had determined to preach no more, because they should be all enlightened from above.

If any Man came to him, that had formerly admir'd his Preaching or Praying, he would ask him, if he could believe that *he* saw Christ? If it was answer'd, that he dar'd not say that, but yet out of respect to him, was afraid to disbelieve, then he would thank God, that He had given him *such a measure* of Faith; and asking him if he could love Christ, char'gd him to *get Oil*. One of his most considerable Friends (whom he much valu'd) was to see him, a Week or ten Days before my going; and put the Case home to him, telling him, He should have a great care of what he said, for the sake of his many Friends, as well as

upon his own account. For there were many had so great a respect for him, as to be ready to give credit to whatsoever he should vent ; which in all probability, would have this ill consequence, That if *he* should, after all his confidence, prove mistaken, they would never believe any other *Prophet before him*, for his sake. To all which Mr. *Mason* most solemnly reply'd ; '*Tis as true as any thing in sacred Writ.*

About a Week after I had been there, another Gentleman, of his and my Acquaintance, made him a Visit, and told him, He ought to be very cautious in talking of things thus much out of the way. But *he* answer'd positively, *As sure as God is true I saw him* ; and added, He first saw his back Parts, and then his Face, which was too glorious for Words to express. *This Friend* then enquir'd, Whether our Saviour had said any thing to him ? And, receiving no answer, he ask'd a Clergyman that stood by, Whether he understood that our Saviour had said any thing ? This anger'd Mr. *Mason* so much, that he passionately turn'd to him ; What need was there of saying any thing, when He has actually began His Reign ?

A third Friend of his and mine went to him, within a day or two after, when he not only asserted the same things, but shew'd the very place where he stood, described the Foldings of the Gown, with the colour of it, and declar'd the several *impressions* that the Spirit made upon him at the same time ; one was, *That the crimson Gown was dipt in the Blood of his Enemies.* This Person had a great Reverence for Mr. *Mason*, and therefore was not free to tell me the other *Impulses.*

I am well assur'd of the integrity of these *three* Persons, who were his intimate Friends, or else they had found no admittance.

I can't omit another remarkable Instance of their Extravagancy, which I received from a sober Gentleman. A Servant belonging to his Family, was standing at Mr. *Mason's* Fire-side, when *he* came towards the *Chimney* with a great Roll, and (whether he

burnt it or not I am uncertain) down he threw it, crying out with a loud Voice, *Fire, Fire, Fire*. This gave the alarm to all the rest, who ran up and down with their *fiery* Exclamations for a long time after.

This Passage I had omitted (because it came from a second hand) had not the Sister (whom I visited with several Queries at *Water-Stratford*, on the *twenty third* of *July* last) in a great measure confirm'd it. For she acknowledg'd, That in a *mystical way* there had been *often* crying out *Fire*, to denote, (as I think she said) the suddenness of the Destruction that was coming upon the Land.

I ask'd her at the same time, Whether they had not often talk'd of *Sacrificing*, (for I had heard of several Stories of that nature, and some of them that seemed *black*) but this was all that she did acknowledge, That there had been frequent mention of *Sacrificing* among them, not in a carnal, but in a spiritual Sense; that as formerly there was *Sacrificing* of Prefiguration and Expectation, so now they did eat the Sacrifice of (somewhat that signified) *Thanksgiving*.

In truth, her Answers were by this time become so mysterious and refin'd (like *Molino's* Discourses in his *Spiritual Guide*) that she made me think of the Converse I once had with a melancholy *Rosicrucian Doctor*, whom I desir'd when he talk'd something obscurely, to explain himself; but then he was ten times more mysterious, and told me, What he said was not to be understood without an *Angelick Understanding*.

The great thing I desir'd to know of her was, Whether Mr. *Mason* (who had been dead some weeks before) had any Sense of his death approaching, and whether he had maintained the same Opinions to the last? I was the more inquisitive, because I had received different Representations about it. She answer'd, That she verily believ'd he had a fore-sight of his death, because he had often said *in this*

sickness, That he had fulfilled his Ministry, and finished his Gospel. Whereas at the end of a former sickness, about three quarters of a Year before, he said, He knew, or believ'd, he should not die, because he had not fulfill'd his Ministry, nor finished the work of the Lord. And I know, a little before he dy'd, he told his *Northamptonshire* Friends, That they should not be surpriz'd if they heard he was dead.

But though he might think himself mortal three or four days before he dy'd, yet I am well assur'd that five or six Weeks before, he had thought otherwise; for about that time *he* told his most particular Friend, That our Saviour would daily converse with him; *and that,* 'till he went to the *New Jerusalem.* Which made him ask *him,* whether he thought he should live always, (or words to that effect) and he presently answer'd, *There is here that shall never taste of death.* The Sister added, That in his former Sickness, toward the latter end of it, he declar'd, That he should not die at that time; because several Prophecies were not verifi'd. The most material was, *Isa. xxxiii. 17. Thine Eyes shall see the King in his beauty, they shall behold the Land that is very far off, thine heart shall meditate terror.*

As to several other Queries I propounded, she answer'd so obscurely, though nevertheless discreetly, that I was inclin'd to write her a Letter about a Fortnight after; which obtain'd this Answer *verbatim.*

Aug. 16th, 1694.

SIR,

“ I Receiv'd your Letter, but must beg your
 “ Pardon in not sending the Papers of my Brother; for I
 “ cannot be free to lend them out, for many reasons, and
 “ have deny'd to do it to a Minister that was his intimate

“ Acquaintance : and what of them has been seen formerly, has
“ since his Death been improv’d against him : and so has all
“ that ever was taken out by *piece-meals*, and has turn’d to no
“ account but *pecking-work against the Doctrine of the Kingdom*.
“ If any Person would spread the Doctrine in course, as it was
“ deliver’d in the four Years Ministry, then all would see, how
“ He clear’d and prov’d all things by Scripture, which he
“ Preach’d. But the Papers that he kept by him, were but
“ part of the doctrine, and the *Midnight-Cry* contains the
“ three parts, which he often Preach’d upon ; That Christ
“ would have a *Davidical Kingdom* here, and that it would be
“ usher’d in by a dreadful Tribulation, and that this would be
“ done in a short time. He also often declar’d, That he knew
“ himself to be the Harbinger sent before Christ’s Face, which
“ several Scriptures point out, that should prepare the way of
“ the Lord, (though he often would say, that he knew himself
“ to be the Unworthiest of all the Lord’s Ministers, but God
“ should have all the glory of his grace to him, for ever.) He
“ declar’d that *by him* the way of the Lord was prepar’d, and all
“ things restor’d in a *ministerial way, by a declar’d Decree* ; and
“ that God had given him *special grace* for this Work, and had
“ *unseal’d* the Book to him ; that was to be *seal’d* till the time
“ of the end, and had given him the *Revelation of Jesus Christ*,
“ and the testimony of Jesus, which is the Spirit of Prophecy.
“ He also declar’d to us about three Weeks before he sicken’d,
“ That now he had fully and wholly done the Work, the *Lord*
“ *had sent him upon*, as to the Message before Christ’s Face,
“ and that he had but very few words more to say to us, for he
“ should *soon be parted from us*, and be with Christ. He told
“ us also, That Christ had took the matter into his own hands,
“ and that he would visibly perform what he had sent him to
“ declare ; He said that God had done the part of a God to this
“ Nation, in giving them warning, and they should know that

“ they were the *truths of the eternal God*, that were deliver’d
“ amongst them, and the words of truth and sobriety; though
“ the Nation had hist at all, and the Devil had roar’d against it,
“ yet God would vindicate this Cause, and that soon too. Two
“ days after he sicken’d, He began to tell us, how God had pour’d
“ in his Loving Kindness into his Soul, *in an extraordinary*
“ *manner*; and so it continu’d all his Sickness. And the last
“ words he spake to us were, that he was *full of the loving-*
“ *kindness of the Lord*. During his sickness he spoke but little,
“ but what he did, was constantly confirming what he had
“ formerly deliver’d. And to the last he still testify’d, *That he*
“ *had seen the Lord*, and that it was time for this Nation to
“ tremble, and for Christians to *trim their Lamps*.

“ And as to our present expectations (as you desire to know)
“ *We believe* there will be a change, according to the word we
“ have had delivered amongst us, and that Christ did really appear
“ to my Brother, and we take it as a Seal to the *doctrine of the*
“ *Kingdom*, and as *an appearance for his appearance*.

“ We do believe also, that the Lord will appear where the
“ word of the *Kingdom* has been Preach’d, where the Seed of
“ the Kingdom has been sown, which my Brother and others
“ have believ’d is meant this Seed of the Kingdom, which is that
“ Mustard-Tree in which the Birds will come and lodge in the
“ Branches thereof, as *Mat. xiii. 32*. And *its believed* that the
“ people of God will be gather’d there, for *where the body is,*
“ *thither will the Eagles be gather’d together*. And that he will
“ appear in *that Mountain* where he has been waited for, as in
“ *Isaiah* the xxv. 9, 10. And we do believe him a Prophet sent
“ to this Nation.

“ Now as to the second Request in your Letter, I find myself
“ very willing to serve you, but not capable; For the Doctrine
“ that my Brother deliver’d was very large and weighty, and so are
“ the particulars of his Life; and I not being able to write Sense

“or English, conclude, that you will be much troubled to read
“what I have writ already. And if I say any thing of that
“honourable Minister, I must say as hundreds more do that
“knew him; That for soundness of Doctrine, for Christian
“Converse, and for Exemplary Conversation, he has not left his
“Fellow in the World. He had such a *continual Tide to*
“*spirituality*, such a *Zeal to the glory of God*, and such a *flame*
“*of love to Jesus Christ*, that I never saw the like upon no Man
“upon Earth before. There was certainly an extraordinary
“*effusion* of the Spirit of God pour’d out upon him, and he was
“the *self-abasingest* Creature that ever I knew in my life. He
“would stoop to the necessities of the meanest, but would not
“yield to the sinful humour of the greatest. He would never
“speak evil of no Man, but would say to us, though you
“condemn practices, condemn not particular Persons; for said he
“a Man that is truly humble, will never open his Mouth in Self-
“boasting, or Censure of others. He was, like *Moses*, meek
“in his own Cause; dead to Affronts, and deaf to Reproaches,
“and blind to Injuries, but a vehement Man in God’s Cause.
“And to the *Cartload* of Reproaches that was of late cast
“upon him, I never heard him answer any thing to them,
“but *Blessed be God that he has accounted me worthy to suffer*
“*in this honourable Cause*. He work’d in God’s Service, as
“if he was to merit Salvation by it; but yet call’d him-
“self an *unprofitable Servant*. He was of an *easy nature* in
“point of Civility, but of a *steely nature* in point of Sinfulness.
“He was the fiercest Man in the world against Sin, but the
“pityfullest Man to the Sinner.

“His Charity was extraordinary to poor Christians, but
“performed with the greatest Secrecy that possibly could be;
“and he never turn’d one Petitioner from his Door without
“an Alms, and most commonly gave them Soul-instruction
“also. Now as to his every day Exercise in his Family,

"I need not acquaint you, for all knew how he walk'd, and how
 "strict he kept the Sabbath. But to note particulars that were
 "remarkable of his Life, would swell to a large piece ; and I
 "hear that Mr. *Hammet*, and Mr. *Mehew*, have been writing his
 "Life and Doctrine, who have been well acquainted with his
 "Conversation these many Years, and have known what a
 "faithful Minister of Jesus Christ he was, and what extraordinary
 "success, from first to last, God gave him *in Conversion work*
 "in his Ministry, and what an universal respect he had for all
 "Christians ; and where he saw most of the Image of God, those
 "he loved best, though they differ'd from him in Opinion.
 "The *Haversham Christians* are able to give a large account
 "of his Life from first to last, ever since he enter'd into the
 "Ministry ; and that *honourable Family* also can give you an
 "account of a good part of his Life, therefore I shall say no
 "more from, Sir,

Your humble Servant,

M. Holms.

This is a faithful representation of the matter of fact, in answer to my *first Letter*.

The *second* obliges me to express Mr. *Mason's* Character, which is but necessary, since the Reports concerning him are very different ; some make him no less than an Apostle, and others speak him a most horrid Impostor ; many have thought him divinely inspir'd, and not a few judg'd him to be diabolically posset.

On my first Enquiries, the accounts were indeed so various, that I could liken them to nothing better, than to some Pictures I have seen of a Saint, or a Devil, according to the different light to which they were expos'd.

But these different Representations have enabl'd me to make a better discovery, by engaging me to trace every story to its first original ; and to examine (more narrowly) the credit of the first informer. And therefore I promise (for I am sure I can make it good) to describe him in his proper Colours, and to set him in a true light ; and if it should happen (as I foresee it will) that some strokes be wanting for a perfect Piece, it is *upon my integrity* to make it the more exactly agreeable to the Original.

When he was at School at *Strixton* in *Northamptonshire*, his earnest Spirit that was then discoverable, made his Master often say, That if he liv'd, he was like to be a violent Zealot. When he removed to *Clare-Hall*, he had the repute of good Parts, but I have been well inform'd, by a Letter from a Clergyman in *Northamptonshire* (Mr. Gray, who was his Chamber-Fellow at *Cambridge*) dated *Sept. 22* that he was but careless in some part of his Life there, that he would be sometimes starting of Questions, in reference to the usages of the Church of *England* (which seem'd to discover some dissatisfaction) and with greater earnestness, than points discours'd only for dispute sake are ordinarily managed. His removal from *Cambridge* was first to *Isham* in *Northamptonshire*, where he liv'd with Mr. Sawyer. I have been told by his Friends, that he studied there most part of the Nights, and when 'twas said it would do him hurt, he answer'd, That he had lost his time at the University, and must regain it. His frequent saying in his Pulpit (according to his familiar way of Preaching) *here stands one that has been as great a sinner as any of you till it pleased God to open his Eyes*, seems to confirm the account of his Chamber-Fellow, concerning his behaviour in the College ; from that time he was most certainly a Man of severe Morals.

Mr. Sawyer (at present of *Kettering*) gave me this account of him, in a Letter dated *Octob. the first*. That whilst he liv'd with him, he was industrious in his studies toward the supply of

Academical Learning, and needed rather a Bridle than a Spur, that his Sobriety and Piety was very exemplary, that his endeavours were earnest both in Family and Parish, to do those things that were honest, just, &c. and that with a most cheerful Spirit, freed from moroseness or enthusiasm.

In *Buckinghamshire** he lived several Years, very near me; and the Families, in which we liv'd, being nearly related, I had frequent and intimate Discourses with him.

In his Principles he was a rigid *Calvinist*, and not a little inclining to *Antinomianism*. 'Tis almost twenty Years since, that we discoursed eagerly about St. *Peter* and *Judas*; and he would acknowledge no other difference betwixt *them*, but what *decrees* and *irresistible Grace* had made. At another time we were no less earnest upon *Imputation* &c. and for a Conclusion to our Discourse upon that subject, he deliberately asserted, and repeated it, That *it was all one whether he had kept the commandments, or broke them all, since Christ had observed them*.

His Preaching did commonly border upon the Predestinarian Points, and did often make his Hearers Melancholy, and now and then in danger of Despair. Very long, and very earnest he always was in the Pulpit, so earnest as not to leave a dry thread about him, as his nearest Friends assur'd me, and so long, as to be always ready to faint before he gave over.

This with his good Life, and novelty of his Doctrine, procur'd him many Followers.

After his two Sermons he commonly repeated in the Evening, to a great number that throng'd to hear him, and

* John Mason, A.M. was presented to the Vicarage of Stanton-Bury, 21st Oct., 1668, by Sir John Wittearonger, Bart, ; which he vacated on being presented to Water-Stratford Rectory, by Lady Vicountess Baltinglass, 28th January 1674. EDIT.

there were few days in which there were not some with him to propound their doubts. But how he could resolve them from *his* Principles he never would tell me.

As for his Morals I must needs say, he had such a (*naturæ bonitas*) complexional goodness, as secur'd him from the bad effects of ill Principles. He was a Person of as great Devotion as ever I met with, and his main aim was to make all he convers'd with to be religious. I think verily he was not only temperate but mortify'd, not only true and just, but kind and charitable. Charitable to the good Name, as well as to the Soul and body. He was *nec iracundus nec irritabilis*, very affable in his Carriage, Meek in his Converse, and never over-earnest, unless (where he thought he could not exceed) for God.

The Family where he liv'd for many Years, and which he since often visited, very lately told me, They thought him as free from Vanity, as others could be from Vice; and that they could never see wherein he did too much, or where too little. I cannot indeed say so much, yet am ready to think, that all his Redundancies as well as Defects, were design'd in order to a greater good.

His Prayers were always vehement, and an awful silence betwixt every Petition, doubl'd their length, with sort of divine breathings. He affected a laborious way of Address, or else 'tis impossible to imagine but that the frequent habit (tho' he had receiv'd no extraordinary assistance) must have given him a greater facility to express himself. He did never (that I could hear of) speak directly against the Prayers of the Church; but as he made use of some of them in public, so (when his head would not suffer him to pray in his Family) if he could not perswade any with him to *extemporize*, he would then desire them to read some Collects of the Common-Prayer, which he said were very good. He was once

discoursing with a very sober Person of the difference betwixt a Form of Prayers, and no Form, when he thus exprest himself. *Both are very liable to be abus'd.* No Form was apt to make Men Vain-glorious, but a Form was apt to make them careless.

His parts were once above the common level, but the ill conceptions that he entertain'd (and indulg'd) of the Almighty, and his dealings, did certainly so besot him, that he was not capable of a free thought, or a rais'd contemplation. Much musing and heavy thinking made him always liable to the contagion of the body's steam.

He was seldom free from violent pains in his Head, and troubled with *vapours* in an excessive manner. His Legs and Feet were often so very cold, that two or three hours rubbing could scarce procure any sensible heat. Tho' he lay in his Stockings and wore Boots, yet he was almost constantly benumbed in those parts.

His Head was often so much out of order, that he could not bear the least noise, and when he heard his Sons read, it was by way of whisper. He was forced sometimes to quit his own House, and to live in an unfrequented part of a large House, near me, where he scarce ventur'd to walk for fear of the noise of his own tread, nor could he pray in the Family (tho' it was his chief delight) at those times, lest he should disturb his brain with the sound of his own words.

He much affected the conversation of melancholy Persons, and had particularly contracted a most intimate acquaintance with one Mr. *Wrexham*,* that was come to *Haversham*, (Mr. *Mason's* beloved place.)

* "James Wrexham, Minister of the Gospel, came to dwell at Haversham, and to officiate as an Assistant to the Curate, Jan. 3d, 1681." (Hav. Reg.) He was buried there 2d Oct. 1684. *Edit.*

A melancholy Divine indeed *he* was, and very often *disturb'd*. *He* had bestow'd much time and pains in compiling a more exact and compleat Scripture Chronology (as he thought) than is yet extant. When he had perfected the Work, he offer'd it to the then Bishop of *Lincoln*, to be perus'd, and as he hop'd approv'd. But it fell out otherwise, and the reproof he there met with, for wasting so much time and pains in a fruitless study, was so much laid to heart, as to hasten his distraction, which happen'd not long after. This Mr. *Wrexham* (who was sometimes with Mr. *Mason*, for a quarter of a year together) was, as he himself own'd, the very Man that put him first upon *Revelation Thoughts*.

His death fill'd Mr. *Mason* with excessive *grief*, and the loss of his own most prudent Wife, before he had well digested it, made it so overflow, that he never rightly enjoy'd himself after it.

For his last four years (which I look upon as his *Apparatus* to his *Millennium*) he thought himself often acted by a *Divine impulse*, and tho' he would sometimes write down the Sermons for the following Lord's Day (as he had formerly done) upon some other theme; yet he had no sooner ended his Prayer, but he would tell his People, that the Spirit mov'd him to discourse of the *mystery of the Kingdom*, and of nothing else.

Thus he went on till last *April*, when he did *φαντασιολογῶν* (as the word is used *Ecclus.* iv. 30.) think all his Imaginations to be certainties; and from that time he contracted (as he thought) such a Friendship with God, as might warrant him to despise Men. For from that very time his *good nature* left him, he became froward in his Converse, reserv'd in Discourse, and impatient of a Contradiction; yea, and seem'd to damn all Mankind but a few in his own way; and thus he continu'd to his last Minutes.

There are, I know, some serious and good Men, that will be ready to object (from common Report) against one part of the Character relating to his Morals: And there are I acknowledge

several Stories banded up and down that look reflectingly that way: But on my word I have examin'd them all, and find many of them to be mere invention, and others to be but empty cavils.

There are but Two, that I can hear of, that are any ways considerable, and those I shall duly consider.

The former is a common Report that he did all this to get Money (*το μαλακον γαρ φιλαργυρον γενοσ Soph. Antig.*) for your *new light Men* are generally covetous.

For an instance of this they tell a solemn Story of a Woman that came to abide amongst them, and Mr. *Mason*, they say, sent her back again for Money, that she return'd home, broke open her Husband's Trunk, brought the Money, and was well receiv'd. This Story I have examin'd, and thus much by their own confession is in it, and I am apt to think no more, *viz.* That about a Year since, a Woman that was his admirer, being told of a Desolation coming upon the Land, and believing there was no place of Security but at *Stratford*, did break open a Drawer of her Husbands, where the Money was that she had earn'd in Nursing, and laid it up in Mr. *Mason's* House. But I was assur'd by the Sister (who I think would not deceive me) that Mr. *Mason* knew nothing of it; for of late he had not concern'd himself in Money Matters, any otherwise than to keep a little in his Pocket to give the Poor.

In Truth, I think he was always as far from Covetousness as any Man living; and the little Provision he made for his Children, (notwithstanding his Frugality, and his Teaching School some times,) is, I think, a demonstration. He could not design Riches in gathering People to him, because there were several Poor among them, that had little other Subsistence besides *their* Charity: And I am well inform'd, That several who had contracted Debts before they came thither, were there Arrested, and had their Debts paid amongst them. And I was particularly told by one of *Northampton*, That a Relation of his, who had

scarce Bread to eat in the dear time, went thither purely for Subsistence, and pretending only (when a perfect Stranger to them) to be of their Party, far'd well for a Week, and then return'd home.

There is another Objection, that has been often urg'd against his Sincerity, of this nature, *viz.* That whereas he has at least pretended to a *Divine Impulse* for these last four Years, *which* oblig'd him to Discourse of the *New Kingdom*, yet whenever it happen'd that he preach'd any where out of his usual Circuit, he would handle other Subjects, and talk like other Men.

But to this I answer, That he did not pretend to be wholly acted by the Spirit in every Discourse; and he often said, *That the Mysteries of the Kingdom were not to be reveal'd to the unprepared, lest it should expose the Mysteries to ridicule, and the Persons to a greater Judgment.* Milk for Babes.

There are, I grant, some other Objections to be made against him, but they do not so immediately reflect upon his Morals, as to prove he had any corrupt design. And though I deny him to be a Counterfeit, I grant him to be culpable. But this I think may be sufficient for the present, in answer to my *Second Letter*.

The Third desires my Judgment of the nature of the Impulses and Vision to which he pretended, and what might be the occasions of 'em.

I Answer,

1. As to the Impulses and Vision I am thoroughly satisfied 'twas mere Delusion, upon these Accounts.

1. Because he had been formerly liable to Mistakes of this kind, for which take this Instance.

Ten or Twelve Years since Mr. *Oliver Pashler*, a sober Divine, of *Buckingham*, within Two Miles of *Water-Stratford*, walk'd with his Wife to give him a neighbourly Visit; they had no sooner enter'd the House, but Mr. *Mason* told Mrs. *Pashler*, she was very kind to let him see her *twice* in one Day.

She was at first a little surpriz'd, and made answer, she had not seen him before for a long time. Then he grew positive, and said, *You know very well that you walk'd by my Horse side for several Furlongs together, this very Morning, as I came from Haversham, and we discours'd so and so, &c.* This put her into a great fright, and made her beg of her Husband to go home immediately, *for her Ghost was seen, and she should not live.*

Mrs. *Mason* (a truly good Wife) seeing her in a great concern, desir'd her, for God's sake, not to be frightened, nor to take any notice of what her Husband said, *for it was nothing else but one of Mr. Mason's melancholy Fancies, and he was often subject to 'em.*

This Relation Mr. *Pashler* has formerly mentioned to me, and several others; and two Months since he told me the particulars.

The case is here so plain, that I need only observe that his coming directly from a Melancholy sort of People, and his eager Discoursing and Praying with them, had over heat his Brain, rais'd the Fumes, and stirr'd the Vapours in an extraordinary manner. He that in his early Years could be thus mistaken at mid-day, might more easily be now deluded at mid-night.

2. I am well assur'd that *the Impulses*, which he, and his Witnesses so much talk'd of, were not Divine, from the wretched Interpretation that they gave of Scripture, which we are sure was dictated by a Divine Spirit.

I could produce many instances, but those mentioned in the Discourse I had with them are too plain to need more.

What could be more ridiculous than his or their Explication of *Heb. 9 ult. He shall appear without sin.* That is, say they, *Mr. Mason shall have no sense of his sins.*

In the Year 1669, he Preach'd and Printed a Funeral Sermon on this Text, and then he could give a rational sense of the words, which he thus explain'd. Christ's first appearance was very mean,

He appear'd as the Son of Man, or rather as a Worm, a reproach of Men, all that saw him laugh'd him to scorn, but hereafter he shall appear as the God of Glory, and the Judge of the quick and dead. In the days of his flesh he appear'd as a Prisoner at *Pilat's* Bar, and as a Malefactor on the Cross. Then indeed he stood charg'd with the sins of his People, but *in the day of Judgment* he shall appear without sin unto their Salvation. *Sed quantum mutatus!* He that foolishly interprets the Spirit's dictates (I am certain) has not the Spirit.

3. 'Tis evident, that neither the *impulses* nor *appearance* was divine, from the ill influence that they had upon the persons affected.

He who before could discourse calmly, and seem'd, for his Meekness, to be a second *Moses*, does now, under pretence of divine inspiration, disclaim the use of reason, and imperiously dictates his own wilful imagination to the World for certain and undisputable Revelation.

It has been well urg'd against the truth of some Men's Religion, that it makes the Man worse that heartily espouses it. And can it be thought, that persuasion descended from above which marr'd (as I have thought) one of the best tempers in the World.

What he was before I have already said, (nothing but obligation) but of late he was so chang'd as to damn the greatest part of the Nation, and to enclose God's love within the petty confines of his own Sect. He was impatient of a contradiction, he would not hear an Argument, and what was worse, he told (I am sure) his choicest Friends, *That the Books were seal'd and there was no place for repentance.*

This I think is enough in answer to the former part of my *Third Letter*, which desir'd my sense of the Impulses and Vision; I proceed in the next place to give my Sentiments of the occasions.

1. He that has read the short character I have given of him, will find such a Chain of Causes, and concurrence of occasions, that he must needs confess, that nothing less than a constant guard over himself, could, without a miracle, have secur'd him from this, or the like *infatuation*.

We see from the very beginning of his life, that he labour'd under the burthen of his own *Idiosyncrasy*, or peculiar temperament. *This* I know he mistook for an advantage, which made his condition the more dangerous. *This* again was more operative from the stinging impressions that a sense of his early miscarriages had left upon his mind. His grief was further heighten'd from the dismal *Idea* he had form'd of God, as if he had made Mankind on purpose to damn the major part; and his frequent converse with Men of the same kidney, fix'd his Error, and made him obnoxious to the *contagion of ecstatick Fits*. Vid. *Baron. & Ful. Miscel. Messaliani*.

There may be, I grant, some valuable Persons who are lightly touch'd with the apprehension of Absolute Reprobation, &c. and may (as they think) make it serve to some serious purposes; but he that ruminates upon it, and converts it in *Sanguinem & succum*, as our Friend did, must either Despond or Prophecy. See Dr. *Jackson*, Chap. 51. of the 3d Tome, *Tit. Inordinate Liberty*, &c.

The Converse I have had with several Despairing Creatures upon this very account, makes me to insist the more upon it: For I cannot see any rational comfort that can be administered to any that believe this Doctrine, because they naturally interpret every Providence against themselves. One concluded he should be damn'd because he met with no *Afflictions* here; and others, who have had great *Afflictions*, look'd upon 'em as earnest of the Damnation to which they were predestinated. There was one indeed, who had thought her Reprobation was determin'd, became *rescu'd* by a signal Providence.

As she was tempted to make away with herself, she saw her child fall into the River, and sav'd it. I went to see her the same Morning, thinking it might serve for a good handle to *rescue* her. I told her, when I found her excessive melancholy, That she had as much reason as any body to believe she was *elected*, because God had made use of her to save the Child. And this consideration (while the thing was fresh) took so with her, that presently she became satisfy'd, and is now perfectly well, capable of sound Doctrine and good Advice.

To proceed,

His excessive *Vapours* were a no less natural cause of his windy Conceptions: He was so far sensible of his being that way infested, that he complain'd much of 'em to his Friend Mr. *Ives*, when he gave him a Visit ten or twelve days before he dy'd. But to convince him that *they* had *no* influence upon his Judgment, he explain'd his Doctrine to him, and so betray'd himself. I am sure (said he) that *Christ* is now entering upon his Reign here, as really and truly as ever King *Charles*, King *James*, or King *William* Reign'd; *but mistake me not, for I do not mean that he will sit in the Parliament House, &c.* This made Mr. *Ives* advise him to let Blood speedily, not so much out of hopes of working a Cure (for he found he was too far gone for that) as to prevent his growing worse.

These Vapours having made him incapable of a sober use of his Faculties, he became dispos'd for a *new Light*, or for any thing that was out of the way. He believed and often discours'd it, That Divine Inspiration was no strange thing, and he instanc'd commonly in Arch-Bishop *Usher*, as a Man divinely inspired, and was under dismal apprehensions of a Prophecy that was much talk'd of, under his Name.

But these were but the beginnings of Distraction: His Friend, Mr. *Wrexham*, had taught him to be mad by Book; (let it not seem light, for I cannot forbear saying it, because I know it to be true,) and the loss of his good Wife made him continually descant upon the *New-found-Ground*, 'till he became compleat Master of the Crotchets.

His chiefest Friends have very lately assur'd me, That the *Millenary-Notion* was wholly owing to Mr. *Wrexham*; and that he never truly indulg'd Melancholy (though he was often liable to it) 'till his Wife (a Woman of more than ordinary discretion, as well as Piety) departed this Life. I must add, That I well know that Mr. *Mason* did not only receive the *Notion* of the *Millennium* from Mr. *Wrexham*, but the very *Year* when it would commence; (he was by the way confident of the Year, though he would determine nothing of the Day :) to prove this I have not only the Testimony of *his* chief Friends, but Mr. *Wrexham's Chronological Talent* to refer to.

Alsted (I well remember'd) in his *Chronology* had fix'd it for this Year 1694. And while I was upon the Enquiry, Whether Mr. *Wrexham* had been conversant in this *Millenarian Author*, (though I had reason to suppose it, because my Learned Friend, that gave me his Character, had told me scarce any *Chronology-Writer* had escap'd him) my *Bookseller* at *Northampton* sends me the very Book that was Mr. *Wrexham's*, and his Name in the first Page, with several Notes and References under his own Hand-writing. 'Tis needless, I think, to cite much out of him, for there is scarce a Page where he explains the Visions and Prophecies, but we find frequent mention of the Year 1694. (See p. 146. p. 148. and 484. *Ab hoc currente Anno 1623. usq; ad 1694. erit protasis sive præparatio ad mille annos Apocalypticos, quibus elapsis incipiet bellum Gog & Magog, & hoc excipiet illustris ille adventus Domini ad judicium.*)

I will add farther, (though here I am not certain) That I verily think from what I have heard and consider'd, that I can assign the cause of the believ'd appearance on that very Day it happen'd, or rather the Night preceding, the 16th. of *April* last.

As I urge not this for Matter of certainty, so I would not be thought to reflect upon Mr. *Mason* in it as a designing Cheat; but I do it to give a probable Account at least, How he that was capable of any false impression, became deluded at that particular time, viz. on *Sunday-Night*, or *Monday-Morning*.

His coldness to the Church *Prayers* I have already hinted, and have in part said, that I meant by it, an indifferency rather than an aversion.

For he constantly observ'd, as far as I can learn, the great Days of the *Nativity*, *Resurrection*, &c. and always was well pleas'd to read the *Epistles* and *Gospels* belonging thereto, And he did most especially commend the *Collects* of any part of *Divine Service*.

The *Resurrection* being commemorated but the Week before, the *Meditation* upon it was very natural to a devout Soul; and Mr. *Mason* beeng fully possest with an Assurance of his Appearing would naturally expect it as a thing in course after his Resurrection.

This (as I suppose) runs in his mind for the whole Week, and when the next *Sunday* comes, (the first after *Easter*) he reads the Gospel, *John* 20, 19.

The same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut, where the Disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you; and when he had so said, He shew'd unto them his hands, and his side. Then were the Disciples glad when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you; as my Father has sent me,

even so send I you : And when he had said this, he breath'd on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost : Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them ; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.

This being *pat* to his long surmizings, gives him a fresh heat, and more vigorous expectations ; And when the day, and he (I should have said the fasting day, for he would eat nothing on *Sundays* that he might make room for vapours, which he verily believ'd to be inspiration) were quite spent with earnest Prayers and tedious repetitions, he naturally became all ecstasy and trance.

Down he lyes (and before his usual hour, as the Divine, &c. observes in a late Pamphlet) and doses on the Gospel he had lately read, which makes so powerful an impression on his Brain, that when he seems to awake betwixt twelve and one (as near as I can learn) He believes the Vision he had in his fit to be a reality, yea, and thinks that he still saw it. This no one will wonder at, that has observ'd how frequent it is for Children, after some terrible dream, to cry bitterly, even after they are awake and their Eyes open. Tho' we bring them a Candle (as Mr. *Mason* had one by him) they still believe they see with their Eyes what they saw in their Dream, and 'tis a long time before we can quiet them and a longer before we can undeceive them. He that shall read CASAUBON'S third Chapter may see enough to prove, that 'tis not at all material in point of Apparition, whether the species comes to the Eyes from without, or from within.

Thus I have, as I take it, given at one view a series of occasions to this *surprising novelty*. I will now insist upon some particulars.

2. His long and earnest *expectation* of our Saviour's Bodily presence did promote the *delusion*, whether we look upon it as a *mere Dream*, or a *waking fancy* ; whether we suppose it a

strong imagination, or a *real apparition* of one of those spirits, that can with ease transform themselves into Angels of Light.

One in his circumstances might easily be impos'd on any of these ways, without any reflection upon his sincerity.

We are all sensible how natural it is for us to dream of those things we *expect*, and according to the earnestness of the expectation it makes a proportional impression upon us. When we expect with Fear, after we have *acted* a Sleep for some time, and begin but to sleep in *earnest*; the enemy approaches, and instead of a repose we find our selves clogg'd with such a dreadful weight, and our heads fill'd with such dismal Scenes, that when we awake we are all Confusion, and continue so for a long time after, though we do all we can to recollect ourselves.

But if we *expect* any thing with an earnest desire of it, we are not only more certain to have it presented to us in our Dreams, (*Quæ enim quisq; impense expetit, quæq; fixius animo menteq; concipit, ea in somnio meditatur, earumq; rerum species noctu obversantur*, says *L. Lemnius*;) but we are like to dose on, because we are in love with the *Phantom*, and would prolong the pleasure, and deceive our selves.

This may have been the case of our sick-brain'd Visionist; whilst his Fancy was working upon the common Theme, it might whirl him into a kind of dosing Fit, 'twixt sleeping and waking, (in which posture 'tis likely he finish'd his rude draught) not so far awake as to exercise his reason, nor so soundly asleep as to hinder his confidence. *He remember'd, he said, That he turn'd himself in his Bed but a little before, and he was certain that he slept not after 'till he saw the Beloved.* And the sight was so entertaining that he could not but love the distempers that occasion'd it.

That which another would have call'd a hot Head, palpitation of Heart, or by the *Gentile* name of Vapours, he presently *christens* an impression from above, a Spiritual Impulse, and a Divine Afflatus.

And then, as my account was, (though the *Divine*, &c. says, that he slept first,) He call'd up the Family of Expectants, who were as ready to Believe, as he could be to tell them; and the more they believ'd, the more was he confirm'd.

I was lately giving this account of the Matter to a worthy Gentleman, that much valu'd him, who was of the same mind with me, and confirm'd the thought by an agreeable Story of his own Lady, that expected, and dreamt, and was equally confident, 'till she had receiv'd a demonstration to the contrary. It was, as she told me, a lucky mistake, for 'till that time (which was but the Week before) she was enclin'd to believe Mr. *Mason*, and his Wonders.

But those who are unwilling to believe he was half asleep, because they heard him Swear the contrary, may, if they please, no less rationally, believe, That he had, by much thinking about it, drawn the perfect figure in his own imagination, and that his earnest desire had as confidently set it afore him.

I have known even a fearful expectation do much, and work wonders of this nature. A Lady in a family where I was very conversant, after the death of her beloved Child, had such fears of Death, that the picture of it was always before her; and she was possess'd with the belief of it to that degree, that when she was invited abroad to divert the Fancy, she would protest almost every ten steps, she saw Death in every thing she look'd on. And would often (to convince the Company that she was not mistaken) call to the Coach-man to stop, and make the Servant bring the *Pebble* to the Coach, which she verily thought was a *Death's Head*.

But our Fears (as I have already said) are not so good at painting as our Hopes, where we meet with no Colluctation, and were every thing helps to uphold the Fancy and nothing to oppose it.

He that has a confident expectation of the beloved Good (whether he has grounds for it or not) shall screw his Imagination into the possession of it, and see it, and enjoy it, by an anticipation. But if some shall still think (as I find they do) that it could be nothing else than an Apparition indeed and indeed, then I say further, That the earnest expectation will abundantly satisfy how it might be occasion'd by that *evil Spirit*, who well knows how to delude the Sense and mock the Fancy.

The *Devil*, tho' he was long since degraded, and expell'd those blissful Regions (and so lost his glory) for misbehaviour, remains still a cunning Sophister, as his name imports ; and the many thousand years experience of such an *active Spirit*, cannot but have improv'd his Knowledge to an *immense degree*.

They (one or other of them at least) can never be thought ignorant of every Man's Constitution ; and no doubt but they hold a mutual Correspondence to find out every Man's blind side.

Nor is it to be doubted but that they do most particularly confer Notes, consult all their Politicks, and unite all their Forces to attack the Person that means well, that is good in the main, and most ardently breaths after the things of a *divine life*.

Those subtle Spirits need not be told, that even *good Men* are soonest decoy'd into a snare, by such as are of a Feather with themselves, that Error will sooner be entertain'd from a Pious, than Truth from a Profane Person ; and that the Messengers of *Satan*, dress'd in the true *Apostolick Livery*, may spread the infection of Error *incognito*, and under specious Disguises.

It is *their Nature, their Essence*, (if I may so speak) to show their spight and malice *to him especially that is any thing God-like* : And if they find him *too wise and good* to forsake his integrity, they shall drive the *Nail* that will go, and smite him with a Notion that will *chase away Sobriety*.

They that think to discern the Spirit, says Dr. *Jackson*, with out more ado, by his way of breathing, may, instead of him, be troubled with an unwelcome Guest, always ready to invite himself *where* he sees *preparation* made for his better.—The Devil has learn'd many ways of *Salutation and address*, able to fill *empty Breasts*, or *shallow Heads*, unsettled in *Truth*, with such pleasant, mild and gentle *blasts*, as are apt to breed strong persuasions of more than *angelical Inspirations*. God grant, says he, in the next words, the carriage of ensuing times may argue these admonitions needless.

3. Another occasion of this Delusion might proceed from his *daily converse with men of ordinary parts, and with mean Souls, that were taken with Novelty, and immediately expected a new Heaven, and a new Earth.*

He seldom or never would Discourse with Men of Sense upon these things, but with poor ignorant Creatures of *great Faith*, (such as 'twas) but of little *Reason*.

Here I grant he design'd well, to bring the *poor* to the Kingdom of Heaven, and thought it more becoming to give than to receive. But this mean Converse with shallow Admirers, sok'd him *farther* in his *profound depths*, and the immediate impression that his Notions made upon their *easie and purely passive minds*, help'd to persuade *him* that it was from God.

That this was his way, I am very certain, and it has been a repeated Objection to me against his Integrity, *That he seldom associated himself with men of sense, and when he did he would wave all Discourses of an elevated Nature, and talk like other men.*

The Objection I have already Answer'd; that which I at present urge, is, That a Man's parts will *rust* if they have not sometimes the *whet* of a generous Conversation, and in this condition, he will either be over-run with Melancholy,

whilst he Converses only with the grim Visages and grisly Shades of his disturb'd Phancy; or else he will become vain and empty, toss'd to and fro with every *flatus*.

4. I may add, that one thing more which help'd forward the Delusion was from his taking too much *Tobacco*. This he thought an innocent entertainment, and therefore he indulg'd it: But 'tis natural for frail Man to delight himself too much in that which nourishes his Disease. I seldom visited him but he was envelop'd in clouds of Smoke, and this, amongst other things, over heat his Brain, and kindled that Zeal which wrought itself into *new Light and Prophecy*.

I the rather mention this, because his chiefest Friend did ascertain me of the Truth of it. For upon my enquiry, Whether he was at all times alike full of Rapture? It was presently answer'd, That generally while he smok'd he was in a kind of *Ecstasy*, and all his people flock'd about him to receive his Communications. It made me think of blind *Homer*, and his gaping Poets.

And so much *for my Third Letter*.

The *Fourth* enquires how it may consist with the Divine Goodness to permit a Person of *no ill meaning* to fall into so great Delusion?

This Query, I confess, was propos'd to me in some-what a different Dress; for instead of a Person of *no ill meaning*, they propounded it, *how a person sincerely good, &c.* But the Word *Sincerity*, when apply'd to an *Enthusiast*, is liable to an arrest. And therefore I shall first give my Reason why I decline it in the present case.

1. He that is perfectly Sincere, will not only avoid all known Evil, (as I hope Mr. *Mason* did) but will suspect his private Judgment, and do all he can to know the Truth; in which particular it is to be fear'd that *he* was much defective.

Dr. *More*, in his *Treatise of Enthusiasm*, though he is some-what tender of some *Enthusiastical* Persons, yet he cannot but grant that the extravagancies of most of them, are occasion'd through their own Fault, and the Guilt lies at their own doors. There is an irregularity or vitiosity of the Will, accessory to this distemper, whereof Temperance, prudent Refreshment, Humility and Attention to sober Reason, would either be a Prevention, or a Cure. Now the neglect of these are in some degree or other culpable, and so far evil, and so far the person is not perfectly Sincere.

Though they are violently, yet they are not irresistably assaulted by their own Complexion. I confess indeed, That it seems hard at first sight, that Reason, after its utmost efforts, should be so liable to the vigour of the *Phantasms* and should be so far captivated by 'em, as to list itself under the Enemy's Colours, and fight on the contrary side. Of which there are several instances in *Casaubon*; and Dr. *More* speaks of *David George*, and others, that were grave and sedate in Speech, and engaging in Conversation, as much as Mr. *Mason* could be.

But to this I would offer two things.

1. That Melancholy does occasion sometimes a particular, tho' not a total Eclipse of the Light of Reason; and then, tho' all the other powers of the Mind act wonderfully well, yet here is an incurable flaw 'till Time, or Care, or Providence, remove it. Now these Persons, as they are not to be flatly term'd *Insincere*, neither can they properly be call'd *Sincere*, being craz'd *quond hoc*, and have the sad comfort of *Hercules*, *furens solus te jam præstare potest furor insontem*.

2. The other thing that I would offer, is, that men are strangely apt to dandle the Children of their own Brain, to cherish their amusing *Phantasms* and *Imaginations*, which they at first begot in the mind, by unreasonable Fastings or Rigours,

(thinking it unlikely that their should be a bad effect of so good a cause) by too intense Meditation, by over-curious and anxious enquiries into future events, by fanciful conceits of new Discoveries, by morose Zeal, &c. Here, I say, it's true, That at first, Reason, and other good means, might have mastered the impressions, but being suffered to brood long upon the mind, then (like a suffusion in the Eye) they tincture and stain it, and every thing in this case appears in the colour of their own disease.

Now, certainly, a Delusion which thus overtakes a Man, must be called voluntary, and so far culpable, though not in itself, yet in its Sources and Causes. 'Tis just as we blame a Man, who through outrageous Love, or excessive Drinking, falls into Frenzies, the wildness of which, while it lasts, he shall be fatally subject to, and yet surely his sottishness in contracting it, can't be call'd innocent.

I do not doubt but *John of Leyden* as verily believ'd himself that *the King of Sion was come*, when he ran naked, and bellow'd it about the Streets of *Munster*; as *John of Stratford*, that he had seen a glorious Appearance of our Blessed Lord and Saviour preparing to judge the World, and to save *Sion*, and the Borders, that is *Water-Stratford*, and the Parts adjacent.

None can give better proof that they are in *earnest*, (but for all that we must not call 'em *sincere*,) than to venture their Lives upon it, as those miserable wretches did in *Germany*, with *Veni Creator spiritus*, always in their Mouths; and as *Hacket* and *Venner*, and his *Fifth-Monarchy-Men* here in *England*, appealing as Solemnly to God as these Witnesses of Mr. *Mason's* did (in their Pamphlet call'd, *Two Witnesses to the Mid-Night-Cry*,) and praying as long as they had breath.

If a Man was Sincere, he would hear an Argument, but all the Arguments in the World are insignificant to such as think they can confront them by a *Vision* or *Revelation*.

Dr. *More*, in his *Mystery of Godliness*, tells us, That *Enthusiastick* Madness is never disjoined from the highest kind of Pride *even there were it seems to be most humble*. For the attributing nothing to itself, but that all its Knowledge and Power is immediately from God, is nothing else but an ostentation of an higher kind of Power and more infallible way of Knowledge than other Mortals have; of which *Mahomet's* Vision is a lively Representation,

It is somewhat pitiable indeed, when the Study of the Scriptures proves an occasion of such Delusions. But *Manna* us'd otherwise than by Divine Prescription, *bred Worms*, and stank. Nor is it strange, that Persons who have fits of our first Mother (Curiosity, and Pride, and Itch after forbidden Knowledge,) should grow giddy, by looking down upon depths of Speculation, which the *Divine Spirit* has interdicted our search into. Such are in particular, our Lord's precise time of coming to Judgment, the punctual Season of his Restoring the Kingdom to *Israel*, which the Father has put in his own Power.

The Truth is, the Opinion of the CHILIASTS, had need be exceedingly weeded and prun'd, or else it will bewitch the Imagination; and ravish the lower Man with gay and glittering forms of the Empire of the Saints, the *New Jerusalem*, Enthroning of Christ, &c. Or else it will. not only divert us from the Expectation of a more Heavenly Bliss, and invite us to sit down on this side *Jordan*; but it will if pursu'd home, sap the Foundation of our Lord's Spiritual Kingdom, by interpreting the Prophecies of it to an earthly Sense. But to proceed;—Could that Man be perfectly Sincere, who (when he was by Office and Duty, a Guide and Instructor of the Ignorant) never minded that of St. *Paul* advising Men *not to be soon shaken in mind, nor to be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, dictated by a truly divine spirit, as that the day of Christ was at hand*.

Could he be in all parts of Duty Sincere, and yet take no notice that searching of the Scriptures, judging of ourselves what is right, proving all things that we may hold fast that which is good, are duties.

Alas! Sincerity obliges us to do all we can to know the best, as well as to act according to the best of our Knowledge.

A rational Believer is not only to believe what God says, but is also to use diligence in searching whether God has said it.

Supine Credulity and neglect of this, is often times a cause that Man is given over to a reprobate Mind, or undiscerning Understanding.

Sincerity must take in *moral Prudence*, (which is the perfection and virtue of the judging Powers within us) to make it complete; and then the eye of the Mind will be kept clear and perspicacious; then will all corporeal Impressions be duly examined, and brought to a true Test, and just Light, whereby may be discover'd what is solidly true, and sincerely good.

This will enable us to form Persuasions about divine Matters, not only confident and vigorous, (for strength of Perception is not always a badge of Truth,) but also true, Substantial and Real, I mean such as will approve themselves to all Impartial Enquirers.

The more we are enclin'd to *curiosities* by our natural Temper, we should the more nicely and *curiously* inspect our *Phantasms*, and examine our own *conceits*.

The neglect of this I take to be the great cause of Mr. *Mason's* miscarriage, and therefore it grieves my very heart to think, that Men who pretend to Sense, yea, and Religion too, should (out of fondness to any Man's person) so state the Question, as if they were more suspicious of God than Man.

Shall we call this Charity, to be unjust?

Shall we be unjust to God, who cannot Err, that we may be charitable to Man, who at best is prone to it? No, no, Let God be true, and every Man a liar.

If we are unwilling to Judge the Man evil, 'till we see his wickedness; Let us, at least, never think evil of God, 'till we can be assur'd of Man's Sincerity; and because that can never be certainly discover'd, we must never admit the least thought that may possibly reflect on God.

I say not this for want of a farther Answer, for I could be full of Argument, let the Question be stated how it will; but I can't forbear expressing my resentment and indignation against all such, as would rob, as would dethrone God, that they may Deifie a Man, and that chiefly for being out of the way.

If they love Mr. *Mason*, because he was good, one would think they should love God too for his goodness; because their beloved Mr. *Mason* could have no goodness but what he receiv'd from him. And if they love him for any other qualification, they do but caress an Imperfection, and hug a Delusion; they do but tread in the steps of the *Heathens*, who deify'd their Passions and Distempers; they imitate the *Turks* who to this day, count mad epileptick People Sacred. *Pessima res est errorum apotheosis, & pro peste intellectus habenda est, si vanis accedit veneratio.* Nov. org. Aph. 65.

Vain Creatures! That profess a veneration for the Man, because they thought him *God-like* and *good*, and at the same time would admit a supposal, That God is less than good, and unlike Himself. I could—*Sed præstat notos componere.*

The Query is, *How it may consist with the Divine Goodness to permit a Man of no ill design, to fall into so great Delusions?*

Here, it is likely, some would have made no difficulty to answer roundly, That 'tis no ways inconsistent with God's

Attributes, to convey a false Persuasion in Religion into the mind of his Creature, provided there be no moral turpitude in it. But I cannot see why falsehood in Religion, should claim Kindred with Heaven, by so near and immediate a descent. God is Light, and in him is no Darkness at all ; nor can the same Fountain send out sweet Waters and bitter. I hope we may resolve the case on better grounds than these. For when God in his Wisdom and Goodness had afforded us his word, and uncontestable Revelation for our Light, and Reason for the Eye to discern it ; and had in the fundamental parts transmitted to us those Scriptures, interpreted to us by the holiest and best of Men, the early Guides of the truly *Catholick* and *Apostolick Church* ; and had done all it could become a prudent Law-giver to do, to forewarn us of our danger in going astray, and to fence us in (while we are in pursuit of Truth) by such Precepts as these ; *To be wise unto sobriety ; not to intrude into those things which we have not seen ; vainly puffed up in our fleshly mind : To contend for the Faith which was once delivered unto the Saints, &c.* Having done this, I say, and much more to secure us ; I see not how more could be expected at his gracious Hands.

If after this Men's fanciful Heads will break through all restraints, and over Hedge and Ditch follow the *Will with Wisp* of Imaginations, and wandering Lights, it is a double injury to charge God of defective Conduct. His Providence is no more bound to preserve us from Error than from Sin, in a forcible way ; nor can it be any imputation upon his Goodness, that after the Provision he has made to make all Men wise and good, there should yet remain some wavering, or weak in Faith, others fluttering after shining Fancies in a Scripture dress.

Can we imagine Truth dearer to Him than Holiness ? Or, that bad Diet will not produce Distempers ? And curious and mysterious Studies in things too high for us, should not end in Vapours and giddiness ?

As for Holiness of Life (which the devout Sister stands upon) 'tis the same thing that was pleaded for *Pelagius*, *Socinus*, and several others that I could name, who led as virtuous Lives, and were as exemplary in their Conversations. But in plain Truth, Men of weak Judgments, and of devout Affections, impressive Fancies, and indiscreet Austerities, will ever be obnoxious, by the plain reason of the thing, to such Temptations; and therefore I must tell such Persons, who have already overcome the relishes of the Flesh, that their proper Scene of Trial and Virtue, lies in cleansing themselves from filthiness of Spirit; such is Singularity, Newfangl'dness, Spiritual Pride, and doting on our Darling Opinions.

The *wholsome Words*, and the *sound Doctrine*, which the Apostle mentions in his Epistles to *Timothy* and *Titus*, do, (if not primarily signifi'd at least imply (*mens sana*) the Doctrine of Men sound in their Wits; and I am confirm'd in the thought from the words set in opposition to *them*.

Thus in the *sixth* of the *first* to *Timothy*, and the *fourth* Verse in opposition to *wholsome Words*, we read of the Man that *dotes about Questions*, that is sick or craz'd, *νοσως*, *Delirat ut sæpe solent ægroti*, says *Grotius*. And *Diodat* explains it by a kind of Frenzy, and violent Passion. *Delirans instar fæminæ pica laborantis*, says a third, so troubled with the *Green Sickness* of the Mind, that (*neglectis sanis eduliis, vel noxia, vel minus sana, deperit;*) he likes nothing but what is unsound, and will encrease the Distemper. And Verse the *fifth*, 'tis oppos'd by *perverse disputings of Men of corrupt minds*; as we read it; but I think it should be render'd, the odd disputings of Men, that have their Understandings perverted.

Yea, I am apt to think that 'tis call'd *sound Doctrine*, in a direct opposition to the Doctrine of Men that are craz'd *quoad hoc*, in opposition to the *Doctrine of the Kingdom*, as they call it.

Titus 1st and the *9th*, Holding fast the *Faithful Word*, as he hath been taught, that he may be able by *sound Doctrine*, both to exhort and to convince.—*Not giving heed to Jewish Fables*. Of which we know the chief was, That the Messiah was to set up a worldly Kingdom. *Non intendentes Judaicis Fabulis de Messia Rege terreno, de resurrectione priore in his terris*, says *Grotius* upon the place.

But to draw to a conclusion. Over-straining of Devotion, produces more crazy Visionists and Enthusiasts, than any one Cause whatsoever: And when, like *Turkish Dervises*, Men have grown giddy and entranc'd by Pensiveness, long Fasting and Rigour (unreasonable and unsupportable to nature,) the next step is, that they shall entitle their several Fancies to some Sacred regard, and deliver Dreams for Oracles. And would you have God work Miracles for such Men's security, who has declared,—*He delights not in the Sacrifice of Fools*.

No—We may justly leave them to walk in the Fires that they have kindled, partly by collision of Hard and Apocalyptic Passages against one another, and partly by hardships upon their natures of their own imposing; which raises the *Lee* of Melancholy in their Humours and Blood, and disturbs the Instruments of Reason, and the Animal Spirits, or chases them into too rapid or vertiginous Motions; as a mere Firestick whirl'd about, shall appear a circle or a Globe of Fire.

Let us not then be angry at the nature of things, nor suspect the Almighty Goodness, because his Wisdom did not permit him to exert his miraculous Power to undeceive his Creature, who did all he could to cherish his Distemper, and make much of the Delusion.

2. But *Secondly*; Whereas you say it is not to be conceiv'd how God should suffer so holy and good a Man to be deceiv'd; I beseech you, for God's sake, to consider again, that we can at most but guess at Man's Goodness.

The inward Principle (which alone can give him his due Epithet) is unknown to us. In Charity we judge well where the Evil is not apparent; but we know a Man may be superstitious in avoiding Superstition, or be over-credulous for fear of falling into Unbelief; a Man may pride himself in his Humility, and his breathing after a more pure way, may be nothing more than an affectation of Singularity. And withal I must say, it gives one some cause to suspect this, where we see People affect a set of new and peculiar Phrases; as, *hanging upon the Skirts of Christ, getting of Oil*, and twenty more such like canting expressions, that I could name.

We may well make a demur to the plea of Holiness, because it is often misjudged by its being measured by the Standards of a Party. Hair Shirts and Discipline, are in some places marks of Grace; and elsewhere, a Man commences Saint, by morose Zeal, from sour Faces, and extempore Effusions.

4. Though he might mean well, yet his sins of Ignorance might deserve Correction.

Sins of Ignorance, we know, are punishable in the *whole congregation*, and they become thereby guilty; as is plain from *Lev. 4. 13.* and therefore is a Sacrifice ordered upon their account, *v. 14.* But Ignorance is almost insufferable in the *Priest*, whose business it is to know the Will of God, and to instruct others.

If he instructs *his Hearers* amiss, it may (it is likely) extenuate *their* Guilt in some measure; but I can't but think, but that *He himself* must pay for it. And therefore it is observable in the forenam'd Chapter, (where he speaks of sins of ignorance, and of them only,) *Moses* begins first with the Priest, *verse 3.* *If the Priest that is annointed do sin according to the sin of the People, &c.* It should have been render'd, *If the Priest sin to the sin or guilt of the People, (i. e. To make them sinful or guilty: to cause the People to sin, as it is well*

render'd by the *Seventy*) by giving them matter to offend, either by *Doctrine* or *Example*, as *Tremellius* explains it. This, though it be done out of ignorance, requires an Offering greater than is order'd for the common People, *verse 28.* yea, greater than for a Ruler, *verse 22.* And therefore I conclude the Sin in a Priest (though it be of *ignorance*) is much greater than the like sin in any other. *He that causes many others to sin, 'tis fit he should be deluded, that many others may learn Righteousness.*

If it be enquired, Wherein did he cause others to sin? I may tell you in a few instances out of many, *viz.*

By neglecting the Rites and Offices of the Church, he caus'd others to neglect them.

He caus'd many of the neighbouring Parishes to forsake their Pastors.

He occasion'd many worthy Ministers of Christ to be censur'd, because they would not violate their Consciences, and do as he did.

He occasion'd a Separation, and encourag'd *Schism.*

How great a Sin this is, I shall not now determine, but be it as great as it will, 'tis I am sure far greater in a Minister of Christ (though I say nothing of his Subscriptions and Oaths) than it can be in another, because his main business is to preach up *Union*, and to oppose those who would cause *Divisions.* I say farther, be it as great as it will in the People, and greater in the Pastor, it will still be an aggravation of it *at this time*, when so many new Sects are brooding.—

Again, His dismal apprehensions of an Eternal Decree, which had damn'd the major part of Mankind, mov'd the fiery Spirits of many of his Hearers, to aspire to the same whole-sale Condemnation.

In a word, he made a great number to neglect their Families their Business and Calling, and to lead a santering life all the Week long.

4. Lastly, Though we should still grant that he meant well, yet God might have several good Ends in suffering this Delusion. Namely :

1. That other men may be the more thankful, that God hath kept 'em within the compass of his revealed Will, and all just Moderation, as Bishop *Hall* speaks it, *Solil.* 29, and that they whom he hath blest with Wisdom, and a discerning Spirit, might the better content themselves with their share (*Casaub. p.* 47.) and be the more heartily thankful for that which he there calls the highest gift of God (Grace excepted, which is the Reformation of it) namely *sound Reason*.

2. There may be another end of this Divine Permission of an Error, *viz.* Because some certain earthy and heavy Complexions are hereby inveagled into the ways of Holiness, and stirr'd up by that vehemency and zeal us'd by such Persons, to bethink themselves of the powers of the world to come ; when calmer Exhortations, though joyn'd with closer Reasonings, would have been altogether unsuccessful. And though this indeed be a way of Preaching Christ, that is (in the main) unwarrantable, and unsafe, yet we know St. *Paul*, when the Principle was Envy and Strife that actuated the Preacher, rejoyc'd nevertheless that Christ was Preach'd, either in pretence or truth.

3. 'Tis worthy of God to suffer it, because hereby an occasion is administered to the Guides of the Church, to exercise their vigilance, and their gifts of discerning of Spirits, in a sober and rational examination of every confident Pretender. The pious and prudent exerting of such their Authority and Care, being a thing of manifest tendency to the safety of the Flock, and to the magnifying of the Ministry of the Gospel, in all the Genuine and Apostolick methods of its promotion.

4. God's Timing of the permission of this Delusion, makes it a more signal act of his good Providence. When *Liberty in Religion* had made Men Licentious, when a most gracious

Indulgence has been abus'd to Extravagancies; *then, then* does it please God to suffer this Delusion, that all Men may be certifi'd of the danger of *Enthusiastick Principles*, both to Church and State. *Nemo satis credit tantum delinquere, quantum permittas, adeo indulgent sibi latius ipsi*, says the Satyrist, *Juv. Sat. 14.*

5. To conclude all, I shall in the last place give a Parallel case which we meet with in the 13 *chap.* of the *First Book of Kings*, of the *Man of God* out of *Judah*, by the *Word of the Lord*, unto *Bethel*.

Whilest *Jeroboam* stood by the Altar to offer Incense, *he* cry'd against the Altar *in the word of the Lord*, and said, *O Altar, Altar! Thus saith the Lord, &c.* His Message anger'd *Jeroboam*, and he put forth his hand against him, and it dried up. Hereupon *Jeroboam* desir'd the *Man of God* to pray for him, that his hand might be restor'd. He did and it succeeded. And the Altar was rent, as he foretold. The King then invites him home, by promises of a Reward, as well as Refreshment. But the *Man of God* said unto the King, *If thou wilt give me half thy house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat Bread, or drink water in this place, for so it was charg'd me by the word of the Lord, Eat no Bread, nor drink Water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest; so he went another way, &c.* After this there was an *old and Lying Prophet in Bethel*, that follows him, and finds him *sitting under an Oak*, (faint, perhaps, and weary,) and smoothly invites him to his House to eat Bread. But he immediately answers, *I may not, neither will I, for I was forbid by the Word of the Lord.* When the cunning old Prophet, found he was sufficient Proof against his Invitation, he then pretends a Revelation (which he thought a proper Bait for a Man that way given.) *I am a Prophet also* (says he) *as thou art, and an Angel spake unto me by the Word of the Lord,*

saying, Bring him back with thee, into thine House, that he may eat Bread, and drink Water, (but he lied unto him.) So he went back with him, and did eat Bread, and drink Water. Which he had no sooner done, but the same false Prophet that deluded him, pronounc'd his Sentence, and as he returns, a Lion met him by the way, and slew him, and his carcass was cast in the way, and the Ass stood by it; the Lion also stood by the carcass.

Here now I would fairly ask, Whether this *Man of God* did not deservedly suffer without any possible reflection upon God's goodness?

For he had as much assurance as it was possible for Man to receive, of the mind of God.

The sign of the Prophecy came to pass, the withered Hand was restored at his Prayer, and we find him so undoubtedly satisfy'd of it, that he denied the *King's Meat or Treasures*.

And should he not (do you think) have deny'd the *old Prophet* too, notwithstanding all his warm Words, and Angelical Pretences?

He should not (you must needs say) have left a certainty for an uncertainty; He was certain that the first Order was the Mind of God, and therefore he ought to have observ'd it, 'till he had receiv'd from God himself (with the same or equal evidence) as positive Orders to the contrary. *Thus saith the Lord, v. 21, Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed THE MOUTH OF THE LORD, and hast not kept the commandments which the Lord thy God hath commanded thee, &c.* *εμφατικως* says Grotius, (and adds, *Virorum laudatorum facta non laudanda quoties adferuntur in sacris literis, solet aliquid addi, unde intelligamus id non probari,*) commanded thee with an Emphasis. When the Scripture mentions the ill actions of good men, it commonly adds somewhat to show the

dislike of it. Now I dare say, there is nothing can be objected against this *nameless Man of God*, that may not be as fairly urg'd against our Neighbour, who had the *Name of a Prophet*, and nothing else.

Our Neighbour had long since known the true Mind of God reveal'd in his Word, and was well acquainted with the evidences that confirm'd it to be his. He had seen the good effects, that it had wrought in others, and had experienced the renovation it had wrought on his mind. It had taught him to deny all manner of Invitations to sensual Gratifications, it had made him above the Pleasures or the Profits of the World; it had taught him to be empty of himself, that he might be fill'd with God.

But when he had made so great a progress in the right way, whilst he is pensive and thoughtful, and *languishing almost for a more blissful estate*, the *Deceiver* overtakes him, solicits him ('tis probable) to return, and promises that very *refreshment upon Earth*, for which he *languish'd*. At first he could answer the Suggestion boldly, *The Word of the Lord has forbid me to expect my refreshment here*. But when he pretends to be the *Voice of God*, for *God's sake*, then he disobeys *his word*, and entitles the *Delusion* to a *Divine Impulse*.

Thus is he entertain'd for four or five Years, and then God thought it fit, that the same false Spirit that first impos'd upon him, should perfect the Delusion, with which he dy'd. *Bene ore mali Prophetæ sententiam mortis accepit, cujus seductione a præceptis vitæ declinavit, ut inde pœnam veraciter sumeret, unde culpam negligenter admisit*, says *Greg.* on the death of the *Man of God*.

Nor can any thing that I know of be said for Mr *Mason*, that may not more fairly be pleaded for the *Man of God*.

If you plead that *his Error* was not wilful, the same may be said for the *Man of God*; and Ignorance or Negligence under the *Law*, was not so culpable as it is under the *Gospel*.

If you say that Mr. *Mason* had many grounds for his compliance; 'tis answered, the Man of God had as many, and more reasonable.

Mr. *Mason's* Friends, I have heard plead, That there has been formerly supernatural Impulses; and therefore he being a truly good Man, had reason to expect and believe them. But may not the same be better urg'd for the other's relying upon the old Prophet, when communications of that nature were more frequent, and he might modestly think, Why should not this old Prophet, have a Revelation as well as myself?

But Mr. *Mason*, they say, had something in Scripture to countenance the Suggestion. Suppose it was so, yet his Anonymous Predecessor had much more; for did not God countermand *Abraham* the Sacrificing of his Son? And was not *Balaam*, that had been forbidden, bid afterwards to go with the Messengers? *Numb. 22.*

These, and such like Instances, might more rationally persuade, than two or three obscure Texts, full of Mystical Allusions.

But notwithstanding all this might be said for the Man of God, *a Lion met him by the way and slew him.*

I urge not this, because I would have it thought that Mr. *Mason's* well-meaning may not in some measure lessen his guilt, and his Vapours more. But I would have those considerations be of what force they can to extenuate the Crime; because I find the Lion did not devour the Carcass, when it had destroy'd the *Man*. And I would have it thought that the poor deluded People were less culpable, than their teacher; because the Ass that stood by (and went only as he was driven,) though he was in danger had no hurt.

However, it should be a warning to every one (that is not quite rid of his Senses) never to cleave to any Man's Opinion out

of admiration to his Person, but to make God only Sovereign Lord of his Faith. It should teach us, that *right Reason* is the illumination of the mind; and when *it* is in a calm Spirit, is the best Inspiration we have grounds to expect. That the Method for our Salvation being long since established, we have no reason to look for any farther Revelation. In a word, it should teach us to be careful in matter of Religion, to keep within the due bounds of God's Revealed Will, and so to endeavour the advancement of the common Good, as that a pious Zeal may not draw in Confusion, nor by a mistake rear up the Walls of *Babel*, whilst we intend *Jerusalem*; as the Devout Bishop *Hall* most piously advises.

A LETTER

From a Gentleman in Buckinghamshire, near Water-Stratford,
to his Brother Mr. Thomas Pickfat, at the three Kings in
White-cross-Street, in London,—giving an Account of the
Doctrine and manner of the Behaviour of Mr. Mason,
Minister of Water-Stratford, within Two Miles of Bucking-
ham. With the Hymns they usually sing.

LICENSED ACCORDING TO ORDER.

London:

PRINTED FOR RANDAL TAYLOR, NEAR STATIONER'S HALL.

A LETTER, &c.

BROTHER,

I HAVE here according to your desire sent an Account concerning Mr. MASON, Minister of *Water-Stratford*, two miles from *Buckingham*: I have sent two Hymns of Mr. MASON's own making, which he and his hearers sing frequently, by which you may gather what their belief is. But more particularly I have heard some of his hearers say, that they did believe they should see Christ appear, but in what manner they would not be positive. Some of them would say, visibly appear, others say, his appearance in the clouds, and his reign in the clouds. Farther I have heard them say that those that did believe this, and did see his appearance, should live one thousand years, and all that while without sin; and likewise, that the fulness of the Gentiles was come in. They call *Water-Stratford*, Sion; and count Mr. MASON a Prophet, in the which the Revelations of St. John is only to be revealed. They do conclude that this reign will begin about Ascension-day next; and that all that believe this, must dwell at *Stratford*, and there they will be preserved, and neither Magistrate can meddle with them, nor any other hurt can befall them; and that they should stand upon Mount Sion, and see all the wicked round about them be burnt up. They have had music and dancing and singing of hymns, and clapping of hands about six weeks, night and day: while some sleep, others sing and dance.

The Week before Easter several Families removed to *Stratford* to live, carrying all they had thither. They sold houses and land for what they could get. They did last winter lay in at *Stratford* twenty quarters of wheat, ten quarters of malt, and twenty or thirty hundred of cheese. This spring they have laid in several fat bullocks and hogs.

On Easter Monday Night Mr. MASON declares he saw Christ : and on the next Lord's day following some of our neighbours went to *Stratford* to hear and see how the people went on ; and being a great multitude of people gathered together round the Country more than the Church could contain, they stood in the Minister's yard, and he out of the chamber window declared unto the multitude that on the Monday night before he being in bed and awake lying on his left side he turned himself to his right, he saw Christ sitting in a chair and a candle lighted in a candle stick standing on a stool, and that Christ was cloathed in a purple robe dip'd in the blood of his enemies, and he confirmed this with an oath, saying, By the eternal God what he said was true, and that himself was neither in a dream, nor mad, nor drunken, neither was he affrighted. But I cannot understand by any that he says the Christ which he saw did speak to him.

He hath not given the Sacraments these last two years. And now they do not read nor pray, only four or five of the last words of the Lord's prayer, which is in the praise of the glory of God. They say *all is done, and there is nothing to be done only to praise God*. They had for their musick a violin, tabor, and pipe.

Those who were of the same faith, they being poor and having nothing to put into the stock, they have turned them off about a week since, from being constant to diet with them ; and they have turned off since the other poor of their faith. There may be about forty that are constant, but there is sometimes five hundred, or one thousand or more, to see their fashions and actions in dancing.

Your Brother *Tom* and *George*, and some other young men of our town went last Saturday night to see them and stayed all night, and they saw them dance all night, but had no musick but only singing of hymns : their dancing is in no order, but after an antick manner, sometimes three taking hands and jumping round, other while leaping from one end of the room to the other, catching over their heads with their hands, and clapping their hands, saying sometimes, *Appear, appear, appear*, otherwhiles *Glory, glory, glory*. There is one dancer among them with a wooden leg, and he makes a great noise among them with his leg when he cuts capers.

This Mr. MASON will not dispute with any divine concerning his opinion, but will only say, *All is done, they that are righteous let them be righteous still, and they that are filthy, let them be filthy still.* Divers Ministers go to see him, and in particular our minister Mr. CROFTS, went last Wednesday, but could not be admitted to see Mr. MASON, he then being ill with a quinsie; but with some of his hearers, in particular the man with a wooden leg, Mr. CROFTS, saying, that the heavens must retain Christ until the restitution of *all* things. The Man said, All things were restored. Our minister answered, They were not all restored, because he had not his good leg restored again.

We do hear that within two days past some of the Saints of the new named *Sion*, have left it, and go about their employments again.

I know no more at present, but when I am further satisfied of their proceedings you shall know of it.

I have sent two hymns. I have a copy which I borrowed which had two more made by some of his hearers, there being little in them, only taking the Lord's name in vain; and time would not permit, I forbear,

Yours, &c.—

HYMNS MADE BY MR. MASON,**THE MINISTER.**

This Hymn they had before Christmas : they sung this, and the other in the tune of a Ballad.

OUR Jesus this day is proclaimed in our Streets,
He's visibly crown'd, and he's highly renown'd
From the East to the West, from the North to the South :
'Tis the language I hear in every one's mouth,
That Jesus is King ; let us joyfully sing
Our Jesus is King, our Jesus is King.

All Glory, all Glory, all Glory alone,
To the Glory that sits on his glorious throne,
All heavenly sweet flowers be strew'd in his way.
Hallelujahs, Hosannas, with millions of praise :
All glory is due to the Holy and True,
Who sits on his throne and makes us all new.

Come now to his temple, ye lookers for Jesus,
His honour advance, and his praise in the dance :
Break forth into singing ye mountains and woods,
For joy clap your hands ye fountains and floods.
Let him be adored by Angels and Men,
And Sion adorn'd with her Tabrets again.

Taken out of Revelations xv. 3 and 4.

ANOTHER SINCE.

'Tis come, 'tis done, this is the day,
My promised Saviour's come away ;
'Tis, come, 'tis done, this is the hour
My Lord assumes his Royal Power.

'Tis come, tis done, this is the time,
Saints light your lamps and run to him ;
The day is past, my Light is come,
My Christ he is the risen Sun.

The Lord has judged the cursed whore,
Her smoak rose up for evermore ;
And now all scandal's at her cast,
The beast and dragon chained fast.

Proud Babylon in ashes lies,
Her sins have reached to the skies,
And God to her reward hath given,
Because her sins have reached to Heaven.

Let all the Saints and Angels sing
Loud Hallelujahs to our King,
Amen. All honour, glories due
Unto the Holy, just, and true.

Salvation to our God on high ;
Amen, Amen, the Angels cry.

Great and marvellous are thy works,
Jehovah, working wonders ;
It lighteneth when our Lord appears,
And when he speaks, it thunders.

Most just and true are all thy ways,
Thy Saints shall bless thee all their days :
Thou art our King they gladly sing,
Thy subjects are before thee.

Had people known thy glorious name,
They would have glorified thee ;
For Lord thou art that Holy one,
And there is none beside thee.

The nations all shall flock and meet
With bowed faces at his feet ;
Thy Judgments shew thy glory new,
Let all the world adore thee !

FINIS.

Great and mighty are the powers

Which rule the world, and all the powers

Which rule the world, and all the powers

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Maurice, Henry

An impartial account of Mr. John Mason of Water Stratford and his
sentiments

London 1823

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